
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CDP-04-2022 Fields & Parks Management Request – Friends of LaFortune Park Maintenance



For Consideration by Council in Committee on March 29, 2022

OBJECTIVE:

To obtain Council approval for the inclusion of the Friends of LaFortune Park, as a management partner operating within LaFortune Park, into Haldimand County's Fields & Parks Management Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CDP-04-2022 Fields & Parks Management Request – Friends of LaFortune Park be received;
2. AND THAT the Friends of LaFortune Park be authorized to manage ongoing maintenance operations of two trails and several amenities within LaFortune Park;
3. AND THAT a grant, in the amount of \$3,900, calculated in keeping with Haldimand County's Fields & Parks Management Policy 2019-04, be approved;
4. AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute the attached Memorandum of Understanding with the Friends of LaFortune Park for limited maintenance responsibilities within LaFortune Park;
5. AND THAT the costs associated with changes outlined in Report CDP-04-2022 be approved and considered as a Council-approved initiative in the 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget.

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Reviewed by: Katrina Schmitz, Manager, Community Development & Partnerships

Respectfully submitted: Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager of Community & Development Services

Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In March 2019, as part of Haldimand County's Community Partnership Program (CPP), a new Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program was approved including Policy 2019-04 (Attachment 1), operating procedures and a grant funding model.

Staff are recommending that the Friends of LaFortune Park (the Group) be accepted into the FPM Program as a new partner to continue their maintenance and operation of indicated portions of LaFortune Park.

BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County partners with many volunteer groups to provide recreational and community services and build/operate/maintain municipal assets – a service delivery model recognized as a best municipal-management practice. In order to support this approach in a fair, clear, and consistent framework, the County introduced the Community Partnership Program (CPP) in 2011, incorporating the following programs: Community Beautification, Community Capital Projects, Community Halls, and Fields & Park Management.

The Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program was updated and approved by Council in 2019; it included nine volunteer groups operating public recreation assets throughout the County. In 2020, the Caledonia Disc Golf Association was added to the Program. The FPM provides groups with operating and maintenance procedures which are consistent with the County's standards, as well as grant funding at a rate of 35% of the estimated cost if the County was operating the asset.

The current request from the Friends of LaFortune Park is for approval to:

- (i.) Become part of the FPM program; and
- (ii.) Annually receive grant funding to support ongoing maintenance of two trails (the 'Ring Trail' and the 'Cow Path' on Attachment 2) and associated signage and amenities within the Park.

Staff have calculated the estimated grant for 2022 would be \$3,900.

ANALYSIS:

The Park:

LaFortune Park is a 106-acre property located along the Grand River, west of Caledonia's downtown (Attachment 2). The property was bequeathed to the municipality by owner Perry LaFortune when he died in 1969. Mr. LaFortune also established a Trust—now managed as a Reserve Fund by Haldimand County—to financially support capital projects related to the Park's continued use and improvement as a public recreation facility.

LaFortune Park was a former campground and includes a paved path that once served as a driveway for now-defunct campsites, as well as substantial open green spaces, and forested areas. A popular disc golf course—maintained by another Fields & Parks Management (FPM) group—is integrated into the naturalized park setting.

The Proponent:

The Friends of LaFortune was established in 2014 to further Mr. LaFortune's commitment to environmental protection and education associated with the property. Over the years, the group has maintained its care and stewardship of the Park, including:

- Monthly meetings (up to 30 members) to discuss opportunities to preserve and promote the Park;
- Annual clean ups of the Park;
- Rehabilitation of one of the Park's pavilions;
- Construction of additional picnic tables;
- Clearing of weeds and brush and adding mulch along the Ring Trail and the Cow Path; and
- Active promotion of the Park through public channels including an engaged social media presence.

The Friends of LaFortune Park group was an eager proponent for the development of the disc golf course, approved in 2018 (Report PED-COM-10-2018) and currently managed by another FPM partner, the Caledonia Disc Golf Association (Report CDP-06-2020).

In 2021, through the Community Partnership Program, the Friends received approval for two activities:

- Painting of service buildings on the property; and
- With funding support and planning resources from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, planting and maintenance of a large pollinator garden.

The Request:

The Friends of LaFortune Park have requested approval to continue mowing, trimming and mulching the two trails (the 'Ring Trail' and the 'Cow Path') as well as ongoing inspection and minor repairs to the following Park amenities: picnic tables, wayfinding and educational signage, and two roofed pavilions (Attachment 2). County staff maintain responsibility for mowing along the paved former roadway, while the Caledonia Disc Golf Association is responsible for mowing along the disc golf course.

The maintenance of these two rustic trails in the Park provides excellent outdoor recreational assets for the community and visitors in order to enjoy forested areas and some of the flora and fauna native to the region.

Staff are supportive of continuing to collaborate with and support the Friends of LaFortune Park in its management of these assets within LaFortune Park – including entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (Attachment 3) – as the Friends have been taking excellent care of these trails since 2016 under a prior verbal agreement with the County.

Haldimand County's Fields & Parks Management Program:

In 2019, Haldimand County introduced its revised Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program following extensive consultation with existing volunteer partners operating these types of assets as well as staff from multiple Divisions (Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations, Finance, and Legal & Support Services) and Senior Management. The FPM program has 11 community groups (assuming the approval of Report CDP-02-2022 FPM Request – Dry Lake Saddle Club) operating public parks, baseball and soccer fields and a disc golf course (within LaFortune Park) throughout the County for the benefit of residents and visitors.

The FPM Program ensures a fair, clear, and consistent approach to identifying and evaluating partnership opportunities and addresses process related to both operating and capital matters as well as risk management and resource maximization. It is the intent of Haldimand County to encourage, support, and maximize these partnership opportunities through the implementation of the policy.

Grant Funding:

The FPM Program provides partners with operating and maintenance standards and procedures as well as grant funding based on a factor of 35% of the estimated actual cost of the County undertaking the operations/maintenance of the asset. The funding matrix – which was developed by staff from the Divisions of Community Development & Partnerships, Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations, Finance, and Legal & Support Services – uses County rates and standards for labour, equipment, and supplies.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Policy 2019-04 states Haldimand County is committed to developing meaningful and strong partnership relationships with Fields & Parks Management (FPM) groups. As well, Report CDP-01-2019 (approval of the FPM program) supports:

- The efforts of the County's current community partners operating and maintaining fields, parks, and trails on behalf of the municipality;

- The County's strategic priority of enhancing community vibrancy through the investment in high-quality, sustainable services which promote the well-being of communities;
- The engagement of volunteer groups in the development of meaningful partnerships which maximize resources and reflect unique community recreation and service requests; and
- The development of new partnerships with community groups interested in operating and/or maintaining County recreation assets.

Staff have reviewed the request from the Friends of LaFortune Park in the context of the funding formula and have established an annual grant of \$3,900, proposed to be added to the 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget as a Council-approved initiative. Due to timelines surrounding this report and the printing of the Draft 2022 Tax-Supported Operating Budget, this amount appears as a New Initiative in the budget document – but will be treated as a Council-approved initiative during budget deliberations, should the recommendations in this report be approved.

The Draft 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget includes \$228,260 for the Fields & Parks Management Program. Inclusion of this request would result in an increase to the levy of \$3,900.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

This request was reviewed and supported by staff in Community Development & Partnerships, Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations, Finance, and Legal & Support Services.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: Yes

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Fields & Parks Management Policy (2019-04).
2. Location Map – LaFortune Park.
3. Draft Memorandum of Understanding – Friends of LaFortune Park.